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OUR PLACE AMONG THE NATIONS

AN ADDRESS

BY

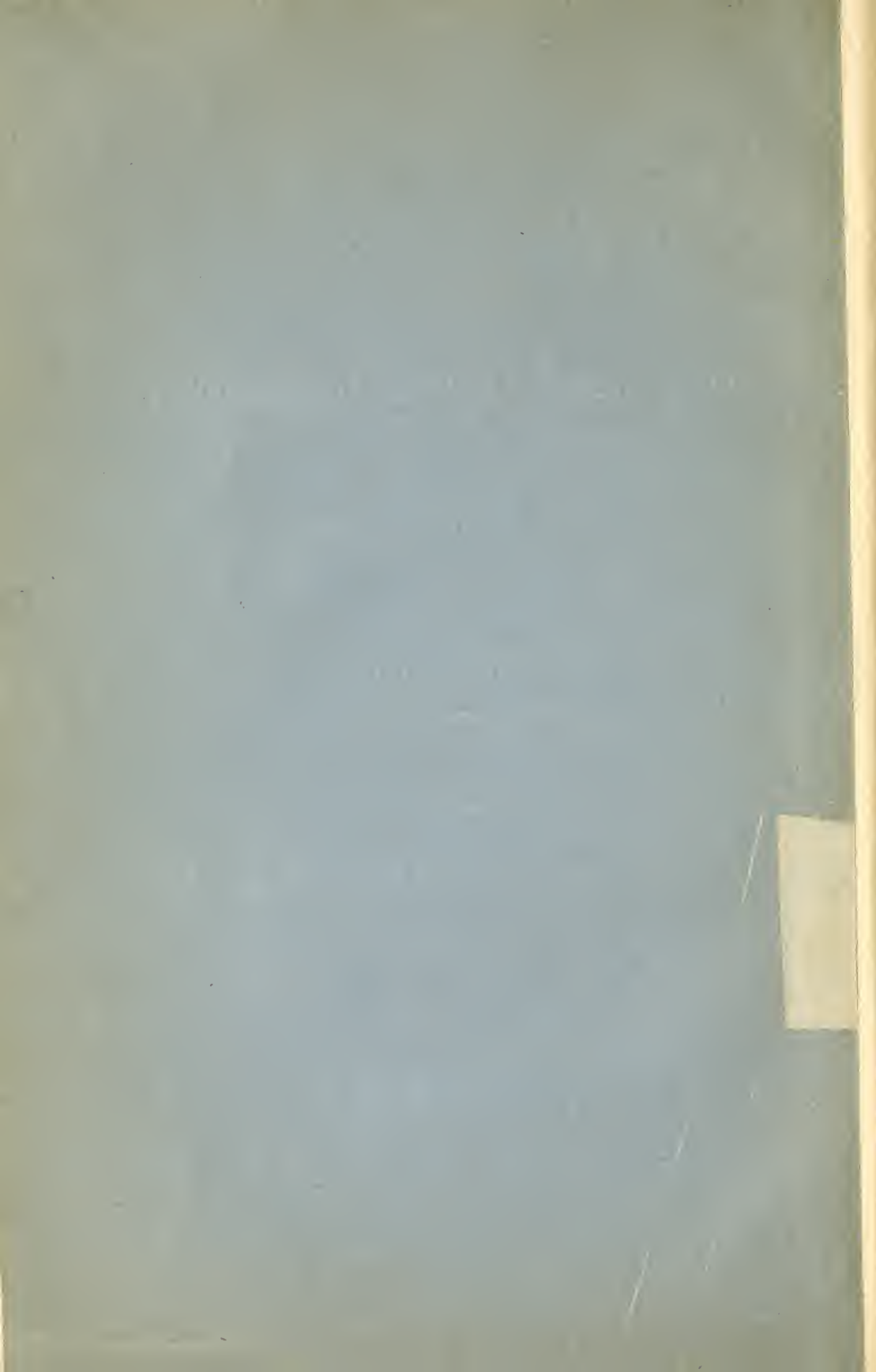
HON. DAVID J. HILL,

THE FIRST ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
OF THE UNITED STATES,

BEFORE

THE UNION LEAGUE OF PHILADELPHIA,

January 26, 1901.



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PRESIDENT DARLINGTON, in introducing the speaker, said :

Gentlemen, the position of the United States in the family of nations will not, in my judgment, be determined by a recourse to arms, or by an arrogant assumption of what we may conceive to be our right to demand, but rather will it be determined by our attitude before the nations of the world, and by wise and prudent legislation. So rapid and radical has been the change in our national affairs during the past three years that our foreign relations demand, and will require, the most serious consideration, not only upon the part of the legislative and executive departments of our government, but upon the part of all the people of our country. Upon Congress rests the responsibility of enacting the laws ; upon the President rests the responsibility to see that the laws are faithfully observed, and upon us, who are citizens of this great Republic, rests the grave responsibility and duty to use our influence to secure wise, prudent and equitable legislation. The first step to this end is to secure the election to our legislative halls of men of unquestioned probity, whose ability and honesty of purpose is recognized by all the people of the land. The near future must and will determine the place of the United States among the great powers of the world. So marvellous has been the development of this nation during the

past century, and more especially during the past twenty-five years, that the United States has become one of the great powers of the world, whose voice will be heard, and must be listened to, in the consideration and settlement of every international question. We are great enough to correct an error if one has been made; we are strong enough to insist upon our rights throughout the world. Gentlemen, let us be sure of the righteousness of our position, and there will be no question as to our position in the family of nations.

The subject which our distinguished guest has selected for his address this evening is one of the most important before the country to-day. Holding as he does one of the highest positions in our government, which brings before his official notice every change and movement in our foreign relations, Dr. Hill is peculiarly qualified to speak to us upon so important a question. I therefore have very great pleasure in presenting to you the Assistant Secretary of State of the United States, the Honorable David J. Hill.

HONORABLE DAVID J. HILL:

Mr. President and gentlemen of The Union League: The patriotic name you bear and the principles which have given existence to your organization seem to be my sufficient warrant for believing that whatever vitally affects the interests of our common country lies very near to your hearts. In accepting the great honor you have done me, in inviting me to address you, it has seemed to me, therefore, that it would not be inappropriate to the hour and the occasion to speak of the place recently taken by our country among the nations of the earth—a place

rendered possible now for the first time as the result of a long historic process brought at last to its culmination.

For long ages men lived apart, separated by mountains and oceans, isolated, unknown and hostile among themselves, and nations were impossible. War, conquest, subjugation, slavery, despotism—these were the cruel instruments by which ancient States were founded; and it is only in recent times that nationality—the child of mutual devotion to common purposes, shared by great masses of men—has been able to extend human organization beyond the narrow confines established by local arbitrary power.

All the progress of the world has tended to unify mankind. The clearing of forests, the search for subterranean treasures, the tunneling of mountains, the redemption of arid wastes, the flight of ships over the sea, have all brought men closer together. Navigation has carried adventurers into wider seas; commerce has united the sympathies of far distant peoples; invention has abridged distance, annihilated time and rendered world-wide publicity almost instantaneous. International credit has interlaced the interests of widely-separated countries, and even our philanthropy has become international, the floating hospitals of Russia turning their kindly prows towards South Africa, and the red crescent of the Turk claiming its right to humanity and mercy alongside the red cross of the Christian in the great parliament of peace recently assembled at the Hague. (Applause.)

It is, gentlemen, one world in which we live, and not a mere juxtaposition of different worlds, and our science, our commerce, our literature and our politics have all become cosmopolitan.

Three times in the course of human history the world has changed its front, each time bringing into one another's presence

larger and more powerful groups of nations. First upon the Nile and the Euphrates rested the termini of civilization, halting as if uncertain of its future, glancing alternately at the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, through centuries of suspense and indecision, while the long white caravans of early commerce solemnly moved across the plains of Mesopotamia and the Arabian Desert, opening the first rude highways of trade between the East and the West; then, turning sharply seaward to begin its westward journey round the globe, Tyre, Sidon, Carthage and the Isles of the Ægean became the forefront of the world. Asia Minor, the Greek mainland, Sicily and Italy entered into life at the touch of trade, and passed out of barbarism into civilization, while the Mediterranean Sea became the focal point of human development, the storm centre of the great imperial struggle raging on the three continents that compose its shores.

For centuries the Mediterranean continues to be the centre of the world, and Asia, Africa and Europe contend with each other for supremacy on this land-locked sea. The Hansa cities rise to wealth and prosperity and extend their commerce to the north, but the source of their wealth continues to be the Eastern trade. Venice, rising from the sea and become the Queen of the Adriatic, is long the most prosperous maritime power in the world, while England, a lone island in the northern seas, has still no dream of empire. Europe, inspired by the migrations on land and sea, when the Crusaders poured into Asia to rescue the birth-spot of Christianity from the infidel, is still building her great monarchies on the ruins of the middle ages, when a Genoese sailor, under the patronage of Spain, impelled by a larger vision, turns the prows of his little fleet into the darkness of the western seas, to find another continent in the search for a shorter road

to India. Returning, Columbus has changed the front of the world once more, the Atlantic becomes the highway of nations, and the New World is added to the trophies of mankind.

Henceforth, all the force and energy of Europe are directed toward the sea, and the maritime nations are eager to plow the ocean with their navies, and establish their colonies throughout the globe. A new Spain, a new France and a new England come into being, to continue the struggles of the Old World in striving for the primacy of the New. A slender line of colonies is scattered along the Atlantic shore of North America, taking possession of the Broad middle zone. The Spaniards cannot destroy it on the south, the French cannot drive it into the sea from the north and the northwest; for it carries in its blood the domestic and civic virtues born in the forests of Germany, and the liberties wrested from the hands of powerful kings by centuries of struggle. Sturdy, industrious, self-reliant, the ever-increasing stream of population presses westward, ever westward, building camps and cabins in the wilderness. The story of westward migration across the American Continent is the most brilliant chapter in the history of civilization (applause), the most stupendous exhibition of energy in the long struggle of man with nature.

Independence gained, the great Northwest Territory ceded to the United States by Great Britain, the self-governing colonies confederated into a Union, and the whole vast realm ruled by a supreme act of sovereignty in the name of the people, an irrepressible race crosses the Rocky Mountains, or reaches the golden shores of California by the slow ships which circumnavigate South America. The natural resources of the Pacific slope attract adventurous men, bold, fearless, indomitable, who, without

etiquette or formality of any kind, take possession of the continent's western rim.

It is needless to discuss the distinction between military occupation, conquest and peaceable cession, for these are all unimportant in the presence of the one controlling fact that strong men have arrived, capable of redeeming nature, able and willing to plant laws, justice and political institutions where but yesterday wild vegetation and still wilder races grew and perished in the rank luxuriance of a primeval age.

Foremost in this race across the continent, voluntary exiles from civilization, fearless, indomitable, the new race looks back with a sort of terror at the awful spaces of plain and mountain which separate them from the eastern home; but the whole vast area is soon to be bound together and made one, held in the inseparable bonds of a federated statehood, sealed by the blood of the whole Union, including that of men who came from the Pacific slope—the awful price of national union—while the great transcontinental railroads, that traverse the prairies and cross the mountains, prove that the United States has mastered its domain at last, and clasped it together with bands of steel from ocean to ocean.

This great work accomplished, each citizen becomes intent upon his private task, unconscious of the changes which time and toil have wrought; but, still farther westward, following the track of the sinking sun far out into the Pacific, Americans continue to wander, building their homes where eternal summer smiles upon the islands that float between the ocean and the stars. Soon the nation is startled by the cry of kindred beyond the sea, claiming the protection of the United States for the fragile republic of Hawaii, brought into being in a night, and asking to share the

flag and the destinies of the American people. This is an impressive moment, and the national government hesitates to extend the sovereignty of the nation over a spot of earth so remote from its continental boundaries, thereby advancing the frontiers of the United States two thousand miles into the western ocean.

The people of the United States have had no thought of over-leaping continental boundaries, have had no thought of far distant islands, except that they would be a burden and a care, but a series of grievances becoming intolerable, the inexplicable incident of the blowing up of one of our battle-ships, interpreted as an insult and a challenge, drives the United States into a war with Spain, and the new and untried navy is bidden to do its work. The inhabitants of the Atlantic seaboard towns shudder with dread at the thought of some destructive Armada looming up out of the mysterious mists of the sea to lay them waste, and peaceful cottagers dream of invasion on the unprotected shores of New England, when, suddenly, in the early hours of a May morning, a squadron of American ships quietly steams into Manila Bay and, before the sun has set, the world understands that the front of the world has changed once more and the Pacific Ocean has become the centre of the world. (Applause.)

I say, gentlemen, the centre of the world, for that is always the centre where the new work calls, where the unsolved problems rise, and where the energies of civilization gather to complete their unfinished task. Upon the shores of this vast ocean, on which nearly one half of the earth's inhabitants are distributed, the natural outlet for their industries, towards which their converging lines of interest are directed, and the medium of their intercourse, is destined to become the most magnificent meeting-place of nations known in the history of the world.

Already more than a hundred lines of railroad run from the Pacific, bearing the products of every zone, and when the great trans-Siberian line of Russia is completed, a journey from Paris to Japan, including the sea passage, can be made in fifteen days. A dozen lines of steamships, many of them operating nearly a hundred vessels, now connect the ports of America with Asia and Australia, where in a former century but a single sailing vessel each year crossed the Pacific from Manila to Acapulco. Several trans-Pacific lines of cable are already in contemplation, to complete the telegraphic unity of the world, which already has one hundred and seventy thousand miles of submarine communication—nearly seven times the girdle of the globe. The future commerce of that vast ocean is beyond all human computation. The annual trade has already reached the enormous aggregate of five thousand million dollars, while that of Japan alone, which has doubled within ten years, is two hundred millions.

Awakening from a wonderful dream to a still more marvelous reality, the United States has emerged from the war with Spain, to find itself one of the greatest oceanic powers in the world (applause), possessing the finest port in the Southern Pacific, the Hawaiian Islands, little Guam and the Philippine archipelago, while her continental coast line of five thousand miles is itself almost one fourth of the entire Pacific water front. In Alaska alone—poor, despised Alaska—(laughter), which has never excited any sentiment but our contempt or our ridicule, according to the temper of our minds—in Alaska alone, Great Britain and Ireland, the twenty-six States of the German Empire, and the whole of France, can be delimited without overlapping its borders. As if to rebuke our lack of

appreciation of a great possession, a competent man of science, after personal inspection of the country, declares that Alaska, the principal part of it, is a much better country than parts of Great Britain and Norway, and even parts of Sweden. If we accept the principle laid down by Montesquieu, which I believe you will receive as a true one, that countries are not cultivated because of their fertility, but because of their liberty, Alaska—poor, despised Alaska—may yet become not only the habitation of millions of happy people, but the seat of great and powerful States. (Applause.)

No longer a federation of little commonwealths scattered along the border of the Atlantic, but a great and powerful nation, commanding the breadth of a continent, and ruling far distant islands, what is to be the part of our country in the movements which are bringing about great changes in the political and moral geography of the world? Shall we repudiate all this glorious history? Shall we escape from the control of those unseen forces that have thrust us into the forefront of the world? Shall we accept the counsel of those who oppose the extension of American sovereignty beyond the frontiers of the continent? Above all, shall we accept the principle of those who desire that the American flag shall be lowered before the standards of a petty and self-constituted chieftain, who has inflamed a single one of eighty-four tribes to insurrection, without ever being organized to constitute a State, without ever being a homogeneous people, and without ever possessing public responsibility? That is a "burning question" which I shall not have the indiscretion to answer. (Laughter.) When the archives of the nation have told their whole story, it will be seen that the treaty of Paris was not a hard bargain in the interests of trade, but the charter

of liberty to twelve millions of human beings, brought under the protection of a flag able to defend them from foreign aggression and internal anarchy. (Applause.) The only conceivable chance that self-government could ever have in the Philippine Islands for centuries of time was secured when the sovereignty of those islands passed from Spain to the United States. (Applause.) In the name of just administration, in the name of international tranquillity, in the name of self-government itself, whatever the American people may decide to do, they cannot honorably lower our flag until order has been established, and the world convinced that the President expressed the real purpose of the American people when he sent to them by his first Philippine Commissioners his pledge of protection, and the richest blessings of a liberating rather than a conquering nation. (Applause.)

And now, gentlemen, what will be the effect of this new position which we have taken among the nations of the earth upon ourselves at home? I think the most obvious certainty connected with the present situation is that we are to look henceforth to an era of unexampled commercial development. Having solved, as we have, the problems of mechanical production and of inland transportation to a point where the chief necessity lies in the discovery of new markets for the disposition of our products, at this happy moment the broad gateways of the Far East seem to swing wide open, and we find ourselves standing face to face with opportunity. This new era of commercial development which is about to dawn is only the beginning of the fulfillment of predictions belonging to the infancy of our Republic. In 1830, Alexis De Toqueville, whose great work on "Democracy in America" many of you, I have no doubt, studied in college or elsewhere, utters words which I beg leave to quote.

Writing in 1830, De Toqueville says, "The Americans now transport to their own shores nine tenths of the European products which they consume, and they also bring three fourths of the exports of the New World to the European consumer. Nations, as well as men," he continues, "almost always develop the prominent features of their future destiny in their earliest years. When I contemplate the manner in which the Americans prosecute commerce, the advantages which aid them, and the success of their undertakings, I cannot help believing that they will one day be the first maritime power of the world. (Applause.) They are born to rule the seas," he concludes, "as the Romans were to conquer the world."

One of the next steps in our national development will doubtless be the creation of a mercantile marine for foreign trade. I say the creation of a mercantile marine for foreign trade, for since 1861, when our total steam tonnage exceeded that of the British Empire, we have permitted our exports to be carried chiefly in foreign vessels, and to-day our foreign tonnage, our registered steam tonnage, is only one third of what it was when the Civil War began, while our commerce has increased threefold. It seems to me that the one yet unaccomplished task in effacing the consequences of that Civil War, during which Great Britain more than doubled her carrying trade, while our merchant vessels almost vanished from the ocean, consists in the reconstitution of that carrying trade which was lost at that time (applause); and I believe I am not far afield in saying, gentlemen, that as long as there is any consequence of the Civil War uneffaced and unredeemed, The Union League still has work to do. (Applause.)

One of the next steps in our national development will be the

consolidation of our national domain, both continental and insular, in the shortening of the routes to market by the construction of an international and interoceanic waterway connecting the two oceans that bathe our eastern and western shores. (Applause.) This, gentlemen, will be our great contribution to the highways of civilization. No nation ought to place any obstruction to the accomplishment of that task (applause), for it is emphatically our peculiar task, and in accomplishing it we make no menace against the peace of the world. If we build it, we shall doubtless build it first for ourselves, and then for all mankind, who will profit by it, and our interests will require that it be the scene and sign of peace and not of war.

Finally, all those new domains that have come, and are yet to come, into our national expanse will enable us to be more and more completely what I am sure every American desires his country to become—a great and powerful peacemaker among the nations. We sometimes speak of commerce as if it were essentially sordid and selfish, and overlook its beneficent aspects. A distinguished moralist has said, “Trade is a plant which grows wherever there is peace, as soon as there is peace, and as long as there is peace.” It is the great peacemaker, and whenever it leads the way, there the gifts of civilization may follow. Already this great nation has stretched its wand out over the broad Pacific, and invited the nations of the earth to make a peaceful and equitable compact in the interests of universal trade. The transformation of China will be the work of the coming century, the century upon which we have entered; but the lines of that development must very quickly be determined. So far as the voice of this nation has been heard at the council board of nations, it has spoken bravely and with no uncertain sound for

humanity and brotherhood, for magnanimity and justice, and never for partition and plunder. Unless the great Eastern question is settled in a just and equitable manner, the temporary makeshifts for a settlement will be followed by awful tragedy and the terrible penalty of misguided policy. This nation has indicated the path in which safety lies, by invoking solemn treaties, which accord to us and to other nations equal rights, and in proposing that the nations recognize first each other's rights, and also the rights of China. (Applause.)

There are those who say that along with the extension of our borders, a radical change has been produced in our national character, and that we are drifting into dangerous currents which may eventually deteriorate our national life. If this is so, then all the triumphs of our material development are but a cause for lamentation; but it is not so, for American life and character were never nobler and purer than they are to-day. (Applause.) Any form of expansion that does not include the extension and diffusion of that which is most deeply characteristic of our national life, of that which we are proud to call our "Americanism," is unworthy of the energies and the ambition of the American people. Now what is that Americanism, which we cannot afford to abandon or disregard without casting the precious pearl of our inheritance into the sea? It is the principle that no policy can be tolerated which does not confirm and encourage the development of all those mental and moral faculties which give force and valor to the individual man. (Applause.) It is the idea of the harmonious and generous co-operation in promoting the general prosperity, without regard to class, creed, section or racial origin. (Applause.) It is the reverence for ideals of equity and justice, incorporated into the law of the land, and

made operative by the combined force of society, supported by the glad and willing obedience of every member. Liberty is sweet, but it is not the sole cause of our national development. Fraternity is noble, but it is not the only bond of our civic coherence. Deeper than liberty and fraternity lies the splendid conception of an imperative moral order, at once the fertile source of our personal rights and the compelling force of our individual and national duties. Without this fundamental bond, men are but self-conscious atoms, and societies are but the drifting vapors that skirt the hills in the morning, but vanish before noon.

The greatness of America lies in the deep-seated conviction of the American people that they mean to do what is right. (Applause.) The way is not always easy, and we may differ as to where to find it; but if there is one thing that may be said of the American people, it is that they will not suffer any great evil or injustice, capable of repression by human power, to have a permanent existence in their jurisdiction. (Applause.) Slavery was a dark spot upon the American conscience; but the hand of Abraham Lincoln, sustained by the better sentiment of his country, swept it away. Polygamy was a reproach to the honor of the nation; but, behold, it is gone, and its apostles have vanished. Rapine and butchery desolated the fair island of Cuba, but the great guns of our squadron thundered "Let us have peace," and we have it. "If you do not trust the people," said a great orator, "you march into night. If you cannot trust the people, whom can you trust?" Presidents and cabinets and councils are never so wise as when they lend their ears to the voice of the people—not the vociferations of mere partisans, but the calm expression of the intelligence of the nation, voiced in the measured, deliberate conclusions of an enlightened people. (Applause.)

As the mariner, when out of sight of land, looks up for guidance to the sun and stars, so a nation in great emergencies returns instinctively to cardinal principles. Aiming at peace as the essential condition for the enjoyment of liberty, at order as the one fundamental necessity of social existence, at justice as the universal right of human nature, the country knows that in contending for these, and in opposing all that would prevent or delay them, it is acting in the spirit of all the good and wise who have gone before or who will follow after. If any government can rise to the level of great human interests and secure the rights of humanity, it is that of the sovereign people, capable of sitting in judgment upon its public servants, and holding them responsible for their official acts ; therefore, wherever the flag of our country floats on land or sea, there is the genius of the American people to uphold it as the symbol and the pledge of liberty and law. (Applause.) In the divine charter of humanity there are no prescriptions of latitude and longitude ; the boundaries of nations do not limit the jurisdiction of ethical principles, and even the vast oceanic spaces present no barrier to human rights ; for there, as everywhere, the eternal laws which Infinite Power has interfused with nature press forward toward their own fulfillment in the unfinished work of human development. (Applause.)

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